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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Culture of peace

Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Elimination of racism and racial discrimination

Right of peoples to self-determination

Promotion and protection of human rights

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Identical letters dated 27 July 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

Upon instructions from my Government and with reference to the letter of the representative of the Israeli regime addressed to you on 19 June 2007 (circulated as document A/61/961), containing certain baseless allegations and distortions about the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, I wish to state the following.

The appalling and notorious records of violation of all human rights, first and foremost the right to life as the most basic human rights, by the Israeli regime are well documented by many international human rights bodies and organizations, especially the United Nations human rights machinery. The ill-intended and futile attempt of this regime to raise allegations against the human rights situation of

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others is nothing but a preposterous, and indeed tired, practice to distract the international community's attention from its shameful human rights records. A regime marked with aggression, occupation, assassination, state terrorism, torture, kidnapping and practically all kinds of criminal policies and abhorrent atrocities cannot and should not portray itself as an advocate and warrior of human rights.

The intention of my Government is not to respond to the groundless allegations raised in the above-said letter, since the absurdity of this whole practice by the Israeli regime is more than clear and requires no explanation. Nor will one be able to elaborate even a small part of the horrific human rights record of the said regime in this short letter. Nevertheless, I wish to refer to a number of reports that clearly illustrate the abysmal record of the Israeli regime in violating the most basic principles of human rights, international humanitarian law and the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter:

- The Israeli regime's horrendous crimes against the Palestinian people, and even its discriminatory behaviour towards the Arabs who have lived under its brutal rule for the past six decades, have long been criticized and condemned by the international human rights watchdogs, especially the United Nations human rights machinery. While it is impossible to include the long catalogue of the Israeli human rights violations, documented and reported by the international human rights bodies, in this short letter, a brief reference to only few of those reports is yet more than enough to show the real face of this wicked regime. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Mr. John Dugard, has reported that "Israel has turned the Gaza Strip into a prison for Palestinians where life is intolerable, appalling and tragic and appears to have thrown away the key". He has further said "Israel is breaking international humanitarian law by measures which amount to collective punishment".

- According to the said reports and numerous other United Nations reports, because of the criminal practices of the Israeli regime "the whole Palestinian population has been terrorized, their properties have been randomly destroyed and a humanitarian crisis has been imposed on a whole population by the destruction of power plants, water supplies, bridges and schools; and by restrictions imposed on the import of medical supplies and foodstuffs". Certainly, this list of the Israeli regime's unlawful practices and inhumane policies is not exhaustive. In accordance with the United Nations findings, the apartheid Wall "has inflicted enormous sufferings on the innocent Palestinian people with Palestinians living in the so-called closed zone unable to freely access schools, hospitals and places of employment in the West Bank". As a result of the continued construction of this illegal Wall, "many Palestinians have abandoned their lands, resulting in a new category of internally displaced persons". Indeed, the United Nations rapporteurs have rightly described these brutal practices and policies as "ethnic cleansing" and as Mr. Dugard has recently indicated "in other countries such human rights violations would be described as ethnic cleansing, but political considerations forbade such language where Israel is concerned". Like many other United Nations special rapporteurs, Mr. Dugard has also concluded that "systematic violations of human rights are being committed" by the Israeli regime. It is unfortunate that "political considerations" on the part of the Israeli regime's patrons have

encouraged the perpetrator of such crimes to continue its inhumane practices and policies with impunity.

- The systematic and gross violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and international law by the Israeli regime have accorded it a separate and permanent place on the agenda of almost all relevant United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms. A number of special sessions of the General Assembly have been convened to specifically deal with the Israeli crimes and several resolutions are adopted by the General Assembly in this regard every year. It was on the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights and has continued to be on the agenda of the Human Rights Council. This clearly illustrates the anguish and concern that the international community feels as a consequence of the Israeli regime's unlawful and criminal actions and behaviour. Since the commencement of the work of the Human Rights Council in 2006, it has thus far allocated three of its four special sessions to the crimes, atrocities and human rights violations of this regime. This alone speaks loudly how dangerously, systematically and grossly this regime violates all human rights. On numerous occasions, the United Nations human rights mechanisms have concluded that the Israeli regime's practices "constitute a collective punishment of the civilians" and that "the Israeli wilful killing of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, constitutes a gross violation of human rights law and international humanitarian law", and have expressed their "shock at the horror of Israeli killing of Palestinian civilians ... while asleep". They have also "condemned the Israeli killing of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, as well as of medics" and have "condemned the Israeli massive destruction of Palestinian homes, property and infrastructure" while expressing their "alarm at the gross and systematic violations of human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by Israel". They have, therefore, "called for urgent international action to put an immediate end to these violations".

- The United Nations Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, as well as the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, have concluded that "serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law have been committed by Israel during its aggression against Lebanon" in the summer of 2006. They reported that "Israeli Air Force attacked more than 7,000 targets in Lebanon, its Navy conducted 2,500 bombardments, and its Army fired tens of thousands of shells and rockets. As a result, 1,191 people were killed and 4,405 wounded. One third of the dead and wounded, and close to half of internally displaced persons were children. Tens of thousands of homes and much public infrastructure were damaged or destroyed. An estimated 1 million persons were displaced ... and entire villages were virtually destroyed". Beyond these figures, their report indicates that the Israeli regime even attacked medical facilities and hospitals and at least "12 medical facilities were destroyed and 38 severely damaged. Ambulances and medical convoys were attacked, and Lebanese Red Cross workers killed and injured ... the people including elderly and disabled were cut off for some weeks from elementary health care, water and sanitation". Another human

rights organization just recently concluded that "Israel has committed war crimes" during its aggression against Lebanon.

- The Israeli regime's pattern of behaviour in violating human rights has also seriously affected the Arabs living under its brute rule for more than six decades. According to the United Nations human rights mechanisms, "they are reported to have received significantly less access to health services than their Jewish counterparts". Relevant United Nations human rights bodies have also concluded that discrimination and segregation features prominently in Israeli regime's treatment of Arabs there. Based on the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, "Jewish and Arab populations have different access to water, which particularly affects Arabs". In fact, such behaviour amounts to the policy of racism and apartheid.

The international community has, in many instances, stood firm and clear in the face of these criminal practices of the Israeli regime. However, more serious and concrete measures are imperative to counter the atrocious behaviour of this regime, which has put the most basic values of mankind in danger by its abhorrent inhuman policies and practices. As one of the United Nations officials has rightly mentioned "the suffering of the Palestinians is a test of the readiness of the international community to protect human rights. If ... the international community cannot ... take some action, [it] must not be surprised if the people of the planet disbelieve that they are seriously committed to the promotion of human rights". The United Nations should heed this call and take resolute action in response to the violation of the most basic human rights and international humanitarian law committed systematically by the Israeli regime.

I would be grateful if you could have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 13, 14, 32, 40, 44, 63, 65, 66, 67 and 100.

(*Signed*) Mohammad **Khazaee**